

UNITED STATES AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 213.]

MARCH 7, 1860.

Mr. BURNETT, from the Committee for the District of Columbia, made the following

REPORT.

*The Committee for the District of Columbia, to whom was referred the petition of William W. Corcoran, Benjamin B. French, B. Ogle Tayloe, Ben Perley Poore, and John A. Smith, praying for incorporation as "The United States Agricultural Society," have had the same under consideration, and beg leave to report :*

That the United States Agricultural Society was organized at Washington in 1851, at a convention of delegates from State agricultural societies, and has since held its annual meetings here, where it has a business office, library, and reading room.

The organization is upon the basis recommended by President Washington in his last message to Congress, December 7, 1796, and favorably reported on by a select committee of the House of Representatives a few days afterwards, *except* that it is sustained by private contributions instead of from the public treasury.

The objects of the society, as declared by the preamble to its constitution, are, to "improve the agriculture of the country, by attracting attention, eliciting the views and confirming the efforts of that great class composing the agricultural community, and to secure the advantages of a better organization and more extended usefulness among all State, county, and other agricultural societies."

On the roll of its members are to be found the names of many of the most distinguished men in the country, as well as of the best practical cultivators of the soil and breeders of stock. Every State is represented.

Since its organization, the society has published eight annual volumes of reports, and has held eight exhibitions in different sections of the country, at which upwards of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars have been distributed in premiums. Nearly one hundred thousand dollars have been expended in preparing the grounds for, and defraying the other expenses of, these exhibitions.

While some two hundred and fifty thousand dollars have thus been disbursed by the society, it has only retained enough to defray its current expenses. The amount now in its treasury is five thousand two hundred dollars; the total amount of the salaries paid its officers is eleven hundred dollars.

This large sum of money has been received and paid out without any legal security, and on one occasion the whole available funds of the society were placed in a hazardous position by the stoppage of a bank in which they had been deposited, and only recovered after a year's legal proceedings and at considerable expense.

Contracts connected with the exhibitions have been violated without redress. Bonds cannot be exacted from officers of the society for the faithful performance of their duties. Gentlemen who stand ready to endow the society with a building and a publication fund await a legalization of their donations.

For these, and for other reasons, the committee believe that the "United States Agricultural Society" should have a legal existence, and approve of the act of incorporation desired by the petitioners, which appears to be intended solely for guarding the interests of the society, and not so worded as to be used for any other purposes.

The committee therefore report the accompanying bill, and recommend its passage.